

# L. I. Purcell States His Position

## Straightforward and Manly Answer to His Critics By First District Candidate for Congress.

Cambridge, Idaho, October 9th, 1918.  
Mr. L. I. Purcell, Weiser, Idaho.

Dear Friend:  
My attention has been called to an article in the Weiser American containing some Gooding dope in which Samuels and you are asked if you agree with LeSeuer's statement and if you are opposed to the spy bill and draft law. You are further asked if you claim to be superior to the heads of the organization which nominated you.

Not that I, or any of your friends, believe you are in sympathy with disloyalty, but because we feel that your position is known I hope you will tell them a few things.

Yours truly,  
P. M. GLADHART.

### Mr. Purcell's Answer

Weiser, Idaho, October 12, 1918.

My Dear Mr. Gladhart:—

My position in support of our government in the great crisis through which we are passing, and my uncompromising attitude in favor of the prosecution of the war until the kaiser and his military followers are brought to their knees in the most abject supplication for mercy—a mercy not shown others—is so well known in this community and over the first congressional District that the very suggestion that I might be in sympathy with disloyalty in any form, or countenance unpatriotic utterances, is too absurd for notice. I have not shouted my every act of loyalty from the housetops for political purposes, as some have done and are doing, but the local committees in charge of war work will undoubtedly testify that I have not only "paid until it hurts" to every branch of war service, but have given space in the Signal until week after week news and editorial matter have been crowded out. However, as your courteous letter was written in friendly spirit, and not with the intent to cast reflections or to do injury, I will most gladly answer it in the same spirit.

I am most assuredly not opposed to the draft or spy bills. I think the draft law the most equitable that could possibly have been passed and its fairness to the rich and poor, high and low has been proven beyond cavil, while the spy bill is not and could not be too stringent to suit me. You may also be assured that I am not in sympathy with the statements of Arthur LeSeuer contained in the letter made public by F. R. Gooding, regardless of the fact that the letter was written before the U. S. actually entered the war against Germany; that he claims to have supported the government since we entered the war, and that it stated he is not and never was national secretary of the Nonpartisan league.

There is, one thing however, our opponents very cleverly avoid telling the public, and that is that neither Mr. Samuels nor myself were nominated by Arthur LeSeuer or anybody else beyond the boundaries of the state of Idaho, and that we are in no way obligated to such. I was endorsed by a convention of Idaho farmers representing nineteen counties in the first congressional district, and I was nominated by those farmers, representatives of organized labor and progressive Democrats in the cities who believe a change in our economic conditions is necessary to the preservation of our free institutions.

I have not been asked if elected to take orders from A. C. Townley or any other person connected with either national or state headquarters of the Nonpartisan league, or to consult with Arthur LeSeuer concerning what I should or should not do, and do not expect to do so. I expect to consult and take orders from the people of this congressional district, and I have been informed by Mr. Townley, national president, and Mr. Scholtz, state president, that it is their business to organize farmers and it is the business of the farmers' organization to select candidates and see that the candidates do not betray the voters into the hands of the special interests after they are elected. I accepted the league endorsement with this understanding.

As to whether I am superior in principle to the heads of the organization which nominated me, allow me to repeat that the organization which nominated me was the voters of this district and to them only do I expect to look for guidance and counsel. From the standpoint of my duty as a congressman, if elected, I am superior to any other man or set of men. I might also add that I am superior in principle to any other man, or set of men, who sought endorsement or nomination at the hands of the farmers of the state of Idaho and on failing to get it have been trying ever since to brand them as pro-German and disloyal. LeSeuer may be all they claim him to be, but he is one against twenty thousand league farmers and twenty thousand league farmers' wives in Idaho who have given their sons as a sacrifice for freedom and democracy and who are a thousand times more loyal than any man who tries to ride into office on his loyalty record whether he is running for United States senator, governor or some other minor county office. It is with these and the loyal members of organized labor in the first congressional district that I have cast my lot and I will continue to fight for their amelioration and deliverance from the nation's conscienceless profiteers so long as God gives me the strength to do so.

The interests accusing the Nonpartisan league of disloyalty are not afraid of any damage that such men as LeSeuer can do, and they do not believe for a moment the farmers and laboring men of Idaho lack in patriotism, or that a single candidate nominated by the league and the Democrats of the state loves his country less than they do—in fact they love it a thousand fold more,—but they know President Wilson has thrown down the gauntlet to big business and proposes to see that wealth stands its full share of the burden of the war and also pays its full share of the debt after the war is over. They know that the nominees for congress, indorsed by the league and nominated

by the Democrats, will stand by the President to a man in the furtherance of this program, and that is what is hurting.

The full measure of hypocrisy in the attack against the Nonpartisan league on the grounds of disloyalty may be gauged by the fact that only three weeks ago Thomas T. Kurl, a prominent republican of north Idaho, and a candidate for the republican nomination for congress a few years ago, was arrested on a charge of sedition and the dispatches did not even hint at his politics. If he had been a leaguer the front page of every newspaper from Portland to Chicago would have been scare-headed with the news.

There is scarcely a county in the state that has not had its cases of disloyalty, but in only one, the case of Mann in Gooding county, have they been able to fasten anything on a member of interesting developments in this case to come to light which may change its aspect. To brand the republican party as a party of disloyalists because Kurl has been indicted would be no more absurd than to brand the Nonpartisan league as a pro-German organization because LeSeuer lacks patriotism. If I believed for a moment that one-tenth of one per cent of the members of the organization were not rich, red-blooded, 100 per cent Americans I would repudiate the indorsement before this letter could reach you and inform the leaders of the Democratic party that I had been deceived and they had been betrayed into the hands of unsafe and undesirable citizens.

Another matter which you did not touch upon in your letter, but concerning which my opponents have shown considerable worry, it might not be amiss for me to mention at this time. I have been charged with sacrificing my political honor to secure office. There are those who have remained silent who could have answered this as well as I but as they have not seen fit to speak, and to set me right, I will answer for myself. As early as last March S. D. Taylor, chairman of the republican state committee, came to my office and said he wanted my help and advice. I told him frankly that I had espoused the cause of the farmers' organization and that unless the republican party in Idaho shook itself loose from the big interests and adopted the program of the farmers and laboring people I would not support its nominees. He stated that he was in favor of doing so, and until the platform conventions met and the league had decided which party ticket to file on I would not be justified in severing my relations with the organization. I finally agreed with him to await developments. Later, in response to a letter from Addison T. Smith, I wrote him to the same effect. Then sometime the latter part of June Miles Canon who was being considered as a League candidate for governor told that in a conversation with W. G. Scholtz the possibility of the League convention deciding to file on the democratic ticket was suggested and he asked what Purcell would do in such a contingency. Mr. Canon informed me that he replied that he was not authorized to speak for me, but that I had been the first newspaper man in Idaho to take up the fight for the farmers' organization and that he was satisfied that I would stay with them. To that I replied that Mr. Cannon had spoken correctly. All of this happened before the League convention met and when it was thought Mr. Cannon of this county might be the League nominee for governor and before there was a thought of my being endorsed for congress, hence the assertion that I changed my views to get office is maliciously false. Had someone besides myself been nominated and received my support, they would have said "Oh, well, Purcell never was a good Republican anyway," but now it is amusing to note how hard the reactionary Republicans and a few Democrats of the same type are trying to prove my intense Republican partisanship.

The fight is on between the people and the profiteers, and progressive Republicans with whom I have fought in the past, progressive Democrats with whom we are aligned in this fight, are going to stand together and win. I have nothing in common with the corporation Republicans in Idaho, and as a member of that party tried earnestly and sincerely to get the honest men in the organization to stand together and repudiate them. In this I failed, and to have continued submitting year in and year out to a leadership as repugnant as kaiserism would have been dishonest and absolutely unpatriotic. With the progressive Republicans lined up with the progressive Democrats for a housecleaning there was but one honest course open to me and I have chosen it without regard to consequences to myself or the slightest mental reservation. My country is greater than any party and so long as Woodrow Wilson is guiding us to a glorious victory against the Huns in Europe, and promises to lead us to just as important a victory against the commercial Huns on American soil I am willing to follow his leadership. And I might add that a thing which worries the enemy most is that they know the people will not have to wait for a package of garden seeds, or a letter about campaign time, to find out that I am on the job and looking after their interests.

I have lived in Weiser eight years and if there is a single individual who can honestly say I have in that time owed an obligation I have failed to meet; that I have betrayed a single trust; that I have not stood squarely for good citizenship and clean politics, or that I have intentionally wronged any citizen I am willing to withdraw from the race for congress and ask the Democratic committee to select a candidate more worthy of the trust. There are those who differ with me as to the best method of obtaining the results I am after, but there are none who can honestly say I am not now advocating the same principles I have advocated from the hour I set foot on Idaho soil and have advocated all my life. The success or defeat of Mr. Samuels or myself, as individuals, would be of little consequence, as we are but the instruments chosen to carry out the platform against grafters and profiteers, but the defeat of the principles we stand for means that the people of this country must continue to remain beasts of burden upon whose backs

the idle-rich and political parasites will continue to ride.

These statements are made, Mr. Gladhart, without consulting the power trust, the timber trust, the mining trust, the packing trust, the insurance trust or the Minneapolis milling and elevator trust, and the signature hereto will be my own, and will be appended without the least mental reservation, and I will not deny after you receive this letter, or at some future date, that I signed it.

With a consciousness that the man who fights for a righteous cause must endure misrepresentation and suffer abuse, and that the pathway to victory is never strewn with roses, I remain,

Most Sincerely,  
Signed, L. I. PURCELL.

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